



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2008

Contact: Darren Gretler, Building Division Chief (858) 694-3730
Deena Raver, Fire Rebuild Liaison (858) 805-5191

COUNTY WAIVES SHELTER DEADLINE FOR 2007 FIRE SURVIVORS *Planning Department Won't Enforce One Year Deadline on Temporary Homes*

The County Department of Planning and Land Use has told hundreds of fire survivors they don't have to worry about an Oct. 21 deadline that could have forced them out of temporary trailers on their property.

The department sent letters this week to 366 fire survivors telling them the County won't enforce its 1-year deadline on the emergency permits that allowed survivors to live in temporary trailers and shelters on their land after the 2007 fires destroyed their homes.

After the fires, survivors were issued Emergency Temporary Occupancy Permits to let them stay on their land and ease their recovery.

"The purpose was to give people a place to live immediately after the fires that was still in their community, where their kids could stay in their same schools and they could oversee the construction of their home," said Eric Gibson, the Department of Planning and Land Use's director.

The emergency permits expire in a year if property owners have not applied for and been given a building permit, which shows they intend to rebuild a permanent home that complies with zoning, health and safety regulations.

A year is typically enough time for people to attain a permit, but County officials say fire survivors have needed more time to settle insurance claims and assemble their plans. Statistics show that 62.5 percent of 2007 fire survivors haven't even contacted the County about rebuilding a year after the fires.

Fallbrook resident Sidney Vanzee said she and her husband have used the emergency permit to live in a 34-foot trailer on their property, and hope to submit rebuilding plans soon. Vanzee said the decision not to enforce the deadline was "great news."

"It means that we're free to live here and start building our house," Vanzee said. "We did rent a house for a while ... but quite honestly, we like to be on our own property. We just feel comfortable here."

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